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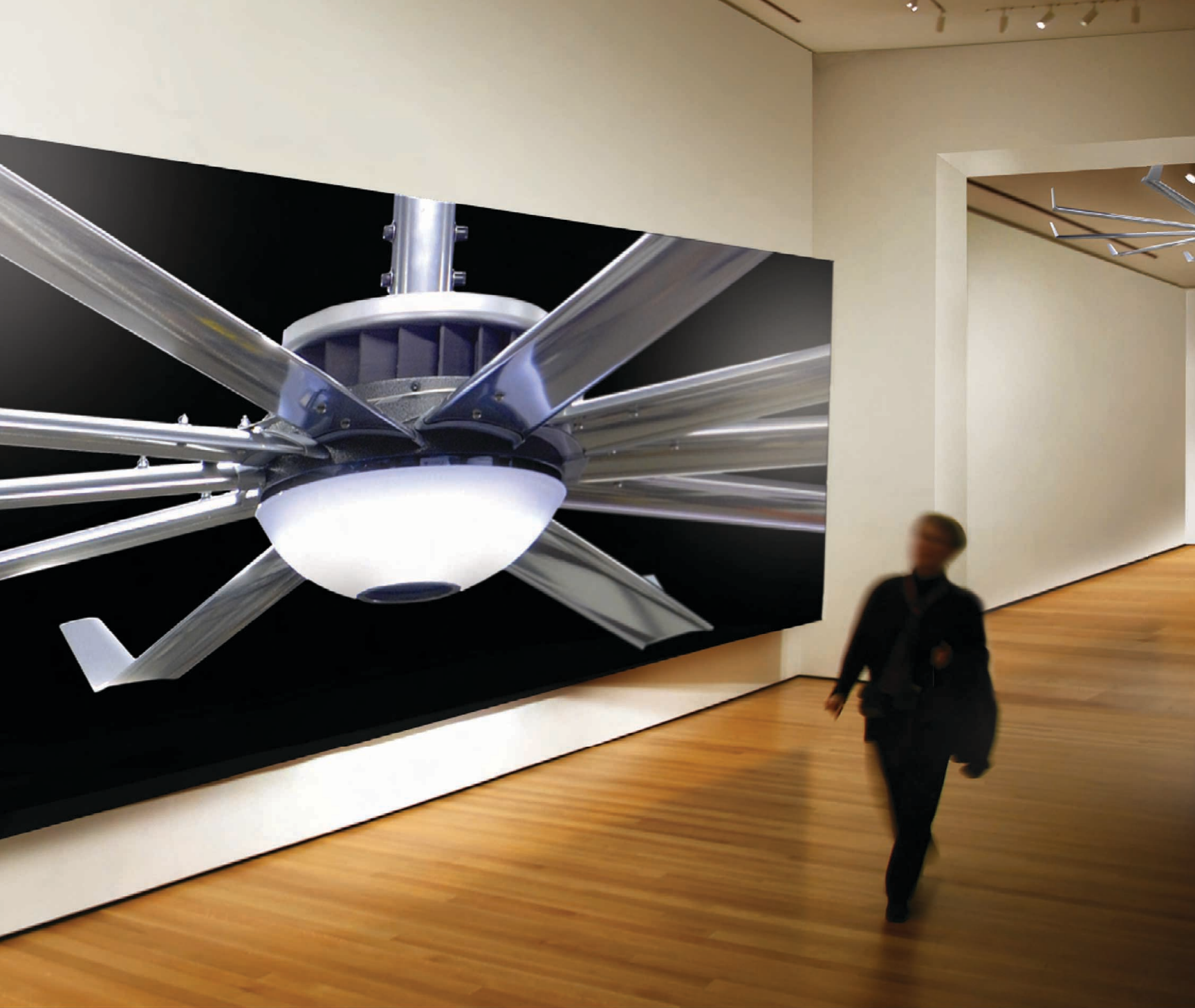
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WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY?



CRAIG MOSHER



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GAVIN MACKENZIE





ABOVE AS PART OF THE AARON BETSKY-CURATED EXHIBITION *OUT THERE: ARCHITECTURE BEYOND BUILDING* PRESENTED AT THE 2008 VENICE BIENNALE, AMSTERDAM'S DROOG AND KESSELS-KRAMER'S *SINGLETOWN* PRESENTS AN ABSTRACTED EXPLORATION OF A DEMOGRAPHIC TIMEBOMB WHERE ONE-THIRD OF EUROPEANS WILL BE LIVING ALONE BY 2026.

Perhaps the greatest understatement over the past few months is that our global economy is held in precarious balance, with the US financial system appearing to be on the brink of collapse. Yet despite this turmoil, current international architectural exhibitions and conferences continue to extoll the virtues of speculative high-rise buildings, the omnipresent themes of super-stardom, and the never-ending questions surrounding regional identity. Is the global architectural profession prepared for the new economic realities that have already arrived?

As the calamities of Wall Street took place in September, copious amounts of prosecco flowed at the opening of the Venice Biennale. Chaired by Paolo Baratta and directed by Aaron Betsky, the 11th International Architecture Exhibition, subtitled *Out There: Architecture Beyond Building*, presents a theme intent on addressing the "salient issues of society." An ambitious program to be sure. "What should be an obvious fact: architecture is not building. Architecture must go beyond buildings because buildings are not enough. They are big and wasteful accumulations of natural resources that are difficult to adapt to the continually changing conditions of modern life," wrote Betsky, a well-regarded architectural thinker who clearly admires experimentation and enticing images over real solutions. Fair enough, given the legacy of the Venice Biennale, but are the installations, manifestos and utopian futures on display enough to inspire architects to crystallize strong experimental visions for today's world?

As one might expect, all the usual suspects are celebrated in architectural festivals like the Venice Biennale. Frank Gehry was awarded the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement and the new bridge designed by Santiago Calatrava opened to considerable protest, as many see this bridge as an expensive atrocity propelled by political interests. When questioned as to why he never made the bridge universally accessible, Calatrava arrogantly replied, "Nobody asked me [to]."

Responding to Betsky's thematic challenge, the architects at the Arsenale and the Padiglione Italia at Giardini produced little beyond seductive installations that fetish real-world issues such as

poor air quality or the increased number of single-person dwellings in our cities. But in Venice, notable attention is being paid to heal this sick, overpopulated and polluted planet. Several pavilions do examine the ways in which global cities are experimenting with new and successful sustainable programs and buildings. Our own Canadian pavilion showcases a range of sustainably designed projects over the past decade while the Danish pavilion offers thoughts and opinions from experts on sustainable city-building practices around the world—including the challenge to move toward bike-centric planning, mass transit urbanization, and corporate social responsibility.

Unfortunately, the plague of fame and vanity continues to spread elsewhere in Europe with Barcelona hosting the World Architecture Festival in late October. Intended as a showcase of new and emerging projects, the festival intends to bring together the world's best critics to praise continuing trends and glorify fashion-plate architecture. Touted as a chance to "network" with big-name architects and possibly shake hands with Sir Norman Foster and Robert A.M. Stern, it's doubtful that much inspiration can be drawn from an expensive trip to Barcelona to hear aging iconoclasts deliver the usual stuff: tall buildings for rich clients, globalization, and regional identity.

It is disconcerting to be devoting so much attention to old paradigms of architecture—all while the financial textbooks are being rewritten, the global economy is repositioning itself, and the need to research and develop more sustainable and innovative buildings has never been so important. In perpetuating traditional formats of international architectural expositions, architects aren't doing enough to leverage their skills and imagination during uncertain economic times. Now is not the time to sit back and listen to architects deliver overtures about their hugely expensive and iconic projects in Moscow or Dubai. Instead, we must work toward solutions in these challenging times where the state of our global economy and the environment is held in the balance.

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A man in a suit is seen from behind, looking out over a city skyline. The city is densely packed with buildings, and the sky is hazy. The man's head and shoulders are in the foreground, silhouetted against the bright light of the city.

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PROJECTS

Moriyama & Teshima Architects design Lakehead University's Orillia Campus to highest environmental standard.

Lakehead University and Moriyama & Teshima have unveiled the first structure in Lakehead's new campus. This and all future buildings on the campus will be designed and constructed to achieve Canada's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Platinum status. Located in Orillia, Ontario, the Lakehead University Orillia campus will be a living model of healthy environments, the conservation of natural resources, a high level of energy and water efficiency, and a reduction in the production of waste and release of substances harmful to the biosphere. Built in three phases, it will be the "first LEED Platinum university campus" in Canada. Chosen from a list of seven architectural firms, Moriyama & Teshima will work with Lakehead to execute a unique design that expresses the University's vision of creating an enduring campus in harmony with land, nature, site, and context. Breaking ground in 2009, the Lakehead University project will develop—in the next 15 to 20 years—a full range of academic programs on this new campus, ultimately accommodating an enrollment of approximately 7,000 students in 1.5 million square feet of new academic, instructional research, and support spaces. In addition, residences will be built to accommodate 1,200 students. Costing \$40 to \$50 million, Phase I of the project consists of an academic building which will accommodate up to 1,500 students, and is expected to open in the fall of 2010.

Bing Thom Architects' Surrey Central City project now complete with SFU campus component at full student capacity.

The 2008–2009 academic year marks the completion of Bing Thom Architects' award-winning Surrey Central City project in Surrey, a suburb southeast of Vancouver. Simon Fraser University's newest campus, a component of the Surrey Central City complex, has now launched its full complement of undergraduate and graduate programs, an important milestone since the opening of the innovative campus in 2006. Bing Thom Architects' ambitious Surrey Central City project, a 1.7-million-square-foot mixed-use development, integrates an office tower, an existing shopping mall and the new SFU campus, which includes a three-storey galleria that appears to float over the mall. The galleria roof is fashioned out of heavy timber and resembles a tall, twisting prow of an overturned boat. Heavy timber construction was also used as the distinguishing characteristic for the roof over the main SFU entry area. The university campus component of Surrey Central City contains 322,000 square feet of classroom and administrative space.



TOP AND ABOVE CENTRED IN THUNDER BAY, ONTARIO, LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY IS EXPANDING SOUTH TO ORILLIA WHERE IT HOPES TO ATTRACT A MORE DIVERSE RANGE OF STUDENTS WITH ITS NEW ENERGY-EFFICIENT CAMPUS. THE MORIYAMA & TESHIMA-DESIGNED BUILDING FEATURED ABOVE WILL BE THE ORILLIA CAMPUS'S FIRST BUILDING.

AWARDS

Heritage Canada Foundation announces winners of the 2008 National Awards.

The Heritage Canada Foundation announced the winners of its National Awards Program, Canada's most prestigious recognition for achievement and excellence in the field of built heritage conservation. This year's juried award recipients include the Town of Aurora, Ontario—winner of the Prince of Wales Prize for Municipal Heritage Leadership, an award created with the support of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales to encourage and reward sound conservation policies and practices at the municipal level and, for the first time since its inception, an Honourary Mention to the Town of Saint-Raymond de Portneuf, Quebec. Julian Smith of Ottawa is the recipient of the prestigious Gabrielle Léger

Award for Lifetime Achievement in Heritage Conservation for his contribution to the practice and management of heritage conservation in Canada, and Dinu Bumbaru of Montreal is the winner of the Lieutenant Governor's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Heritage Conservation at the Provincial Level for his lifetime leadership and commitment to heritage conservation in Quebec. The 2008 non-juried award recipients include l'Auberge Saint-Antoine in Quebec City, recipient of a National Achievement Award for its extensive three-phase architectural and archaeological restoration project as well as Senator Pat Carney (Ret.) of British Columbia and Barry MacDonald of Chezzetcook, Nova Scotia, as the first-time recipients of the Governor's Award in recognition of their tireless efforts in bringing about the recent passage of the federal *Act to Protect Heritage Lighthouses*. The Heritage

Canada Foundation is a national charitable organization dedicated to the preservation of Canada's built heritage and historic places. www.heritagecanada.org/eng/services/awards.html#national2008

Call for nominations for INDEX:AWARD 2009.

A call for nominations has been issued for the 2009 INDEX:AWARD, an international design awards program acknowledging designs that contribute to improvement in people's lives. This internationally recognized design award accepts nominations from all design disciplines, including industrial design, service design, architecture and graphic design. The date of the nominated design must be after 2004. From the finalists, the jury will award the winner(s) with a prize of 100,000 Euros at an award ceremony in Copenhagen in August 2009. Anyone can nominate designs for the award, and nominating bodies and individuals will be asked to address the jury's evaluation criteria—for example, the form, impact and context of the nominated design. To secure maximum participation of designers and their relevant designs, there is no nomination fee. All nominated designs will be featured on the INDEX:AWARD website, and the deadline for submission of nominations for the award is December 8, 2008. Previous winners include Architecture for Humanity for Siyathemba, a field of hope; Tesla Motors for the Tesla Road-

ster; OLPC for XO1; and Vestergaard Frandsen for LifeStraw.

www.indexaward.dk

Diamond + Schmitt Architects win third Businessweek/Architectural Record award.

Toronto-based design firm Diamond and Schmitt Architects has won its third award from *BusinessWeek* and *Architectural Record* magazines' annual "Good Design is Good Business" international competition for its design of Sidney Harman Hall, the new home of the Shakespeare Theatre Company in Washington, DC. This competition, now in its 11th year, recognizes innovative architecture that utilizes design excellence to help clients achieve strategic goals and objectives. Diamond and Schmitt Architects have previously won this award for the design of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2004) and the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts (2007). Sidney Harman Hall is one of only six projects honoured from a competitive pool of 90 projects from around the world. The Hall, opened in October 2007, has expanded the vision of the organization in extraordinary ways, broadening and deepening a commitment to classical theatre while at the same time embracing all of the performing arts. The Company has utilized the theatre's design excellence to its advantage, increasing the number of yearly productions and attracting a higher calibre of performer to the facility.

COMPETITIONS

2009 Metropolis Next Generation Design Competition.

Metropolis magazine challenges young designers to apply their innovative talents to our energy addiction and rethink the broken models that represented 20th-century life and work. The competition, which has been promoting activism, social involvement, and entrepreneurship in design since 2003, supports and showcases young designers' outstanding innovations. This year, *Metropolis* is taking its cues from the headlines. Rising energy costs are the focus of the worldwide competition, which is open to all designers in practice for 10 years or less, as well as to students. The magazine seeks entries at all scales of design—urban, landscape, building, interior, object, communication—and for every aspect of the man-made environment. As evidence builds on the economic consequences of a fossil-fuels monoculture and the destruction of our environment, *Metropolis* encourages the design community to incorporate this information into its design solutions, to challenge our current patterns of living and working, and to come up with ways to reconnect these daily human functions while minimizing fossil-fuel usage. The prize is a \$10,000 award to an individual or team, and the deadline for entries is January 30, 2009.

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WHAT'S NEW

Worlds Away: New Suburban Landscapes.

More Americans now live in suburbs than in rural and urban areas combined. Despite this staggering statistic, the suburbs have been underexamined until recently, and even defining suburbia itself has proven to be a surprisingly difficult challenge. *Worlds Away: New Suburban Landscapes*, on view in Carnegie Museum of Art's Heinz Architectural Center from October 4, 2008 to January 18, 2009, features more than 100 architectural drawings and models, installations, photographs, paintings, works on paper, sculptures, and videos, created in response to contemporary suburbia by 33 artists and architects. The suburban landscape over the last half-century has evolved from the mythical white middle-class utopia of nuclear families to a place that embraces diverse communities of new immigrants, ethnic minorities, and households without children. Where the suburb was once the residential tract of homes located at the end of the streetcar line or the "bedroom community" of sitcom notoriety, it has been dynamically transformed to include self-contained city-like "technoburbs" of office parks and high-tech research campuses and "boomburbs," where explosive growth creates a population size rivaling that of adjacent cities. The exhibition is organized around three main themes: residential areas and homes; retail, with a focus on the strip

mall, shopping mall and "big box" stores; and roadways and car culture.

www.cmoa.org

Cannon Design opens Calgary office.

Cannon Design has announced the establishment of its newest Canadian office in Calgary. In response to North America's leading economy and trend towards P3 projects in Alberta, Cannon Design is expanding their western regional presence in the Canadian market. The new practice will focus primarily on health care, sports, recreation and wellness development. Cannon Design has served the Alberta market for over 20 years, with their predecessor firm Johnston Sport Architecture having established itself in Calgary in 1986. The Calgary firm offers the expertise of a specialized sports team and experience in the P3 health-care market. The practice is led by Doug Campbell, Vice President, an architect of wide-ranging public, commercial and residential projects and John Paulsen, a specialist in sport and recreation facilities who lends over 25 years of managing high-performance teams in the area of planning, design, construction and operation. With their combined leadership and knowledge, the practice is set to expand their team within the next three months. Cannon Design's portfolio of work in Calgary includes an extensive range of health and wellness projects, covering university and health care, federal and civic initiatives. At present, the

firm employs a staff of 800, delivering services in 17 offices throughout North America, as well as abroad in Shanghai and Mumbai.

www.cannondesign.com

Landscape Infrastructures Symposium: Emerging Practices, Paradigms & Technologies Reshaping the Contemporary Urban Landscape.

Foregrounding the reciprocity between landscape and infrastructure, this one-day symposium gathers a series of influential thinkers and practitioners from around the world to discuss emerging practices, paradigms and technologies that are reshaping the contemporary urban landscape. Re-examining the historically divisive, technocratic nature of engineered infrastructure, the symposium will aim at formulating a more synthetic vision of urban infrastructure as a landscape that combines ecological and economic imperatives of big cities. The penultimate objective of the symposium is to reposition the agency of landscape architects, urban designers and architects vis-à-vis the design of urban infrastructures for the new economy of the 21st century. The symposium will be held at the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape & Design, University of Toronto on Saturday, October 25th, 2008 in Room 103 from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm. The event is open to the public and attendance is free of charge.

www.daniels.utoronto.ca

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THE DIAMOND TRADE

Insight and On Site: The Architecture of Diamond and Schmitt

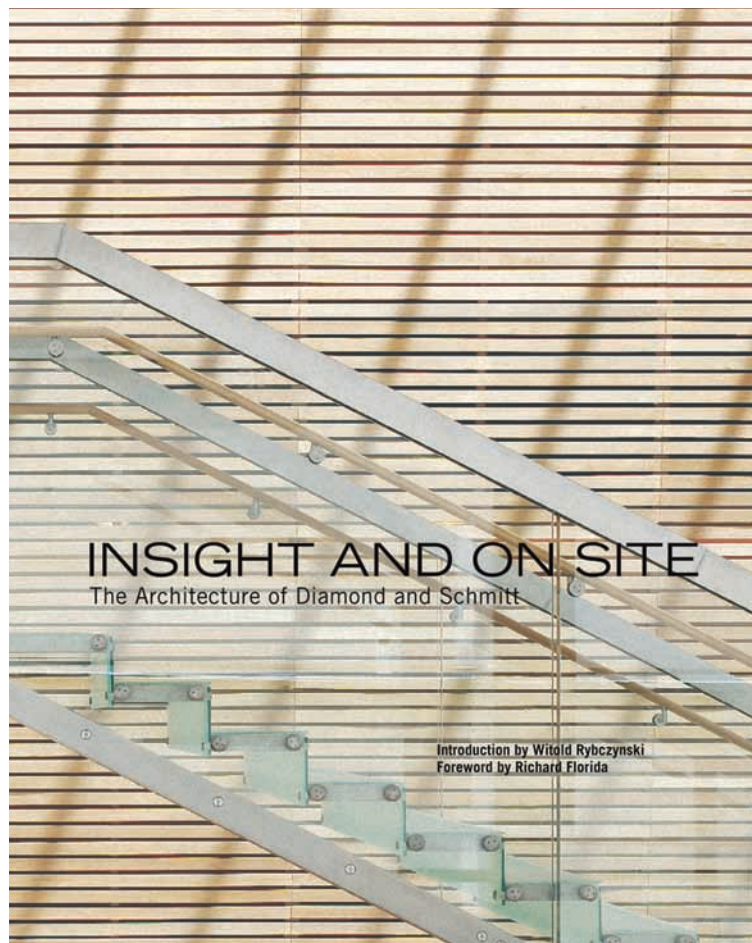
By Jack Diamond, Donald Schmitt and Don Gillmor. Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 2008.

In the opening pages of *Insight and On Site: The Architecture of Diamond and Schmitt*, pundit-du-jour Richard Florida begins his foreword by misquoting the lyrics of the theme song of the television show *Weeds*. “Little houses on a hillside, little houses made of ticky-tacky,” writes Florida, unwittingly wringing the satire out of the 1960s folksong *Little Boxes* whose lyrics describe suburbia as “little boxes on a hillside.” The word “boxes” is what imbues this song with its withering architectural critique: when houses are all designed alike, they are not houses; they’re just *boxes*. But a pragmatist might shrug that it’s not worth quibbling, because most architects never bother to read the texts anyway; they just scan the pictures and bylines. Florida, the social scientist and bestselling author who coined the buzzterm “creative class,” is himself a brand name, and it’s hard to discern any reason for the inclusion of his brief and underwhelming preface except to smear on the same daub of celebrity that bedazzles museum trustees.

Insight and On Site is certainly not the only monograph afflicted by this inherent contradiction. Architectural publishing is grappling with two common and conflicting goals—one of them to make a broad, socially trenchant statement and the other to enhance their own firms’ profiles in the global marketplace. When these two independently reasonable goals conflate into one architect-sponsored monograph, they cancel each other out. Herein lies the irony: for all their high production quality and illustrious subjects, the new genre of books often seems to be as formulaic and self-important as the architectural culture they decry.

In this context, *Insight and On Site* is not a bad monograph but a typical one, and a proviso of just how difficult it is for any architectural firm to walk the line between elucidation and self-aggrandizement. Mere documentation of a studio’s work is dull and solipsistic. Attempting to position one’s work in the context of world issues is one way around it, but it can backfire. In the essays of *Insight and On Site*, grandiose statements in oversize type blare out from the pages, such as this: “The planning and building of cities has never been more crucial because today’s issues are not focused merely on aesthetics but on survival.” Splayed out over an entire page, such an assertion reeks of disingenuous sanctimony. Global survival has *always* figured hugely among the issues of the day, ever since our ancestors flopped out of the primordial slime to face bouts of starvation, plagues and warfare. For that matter, there is nothing “new” or unique about architecture that pays attention to context, sustainability, community and creativity, Richard Florida’s preliminary assertion notwithstanding.

The past century’s transitional periods—Neoclassicism to Modernism and then Modernism to Postmodernism (or, for that matter, right back to the Ten Books of Vitruvius) were natural opportunities for an honest-to-god manifesto, whether you agreed with it or not. Thus Le Corbusier’s *Vers une Architecture* and, almost 50 years later, Venturi’s *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* both exuded a true sense of urgency and relevance, even though offering ideologically opposing arguments. Back then, architects did not feel the need to festoon their manifestos with celebrity endorsements or lavish photography, and yet they made a resounding impact just the same. The Diamond & Schmitt argument is that architecture should neither fall prey to the current culture of celebrity nor to the cult of beauty. But its pop-cultured foreword and its exhaustive display of its own projects in lavish full-page bleed argue otherwise.



On a bright note, the prose itself does not succumb to the doltish and grammatically suspect baffle-gab of so many architectural treatises. The gifts of co-author Don Gillmor, one of Canada’s most talented magazine writers, have no doubt been well harnessed here, and Witold Rybczynski serves up some clear and straightforward interview questions. And much of the architecture is programmatically impressive if not often sexy: Diamond & Schmitt is justifiably renowned for good urbanism, consistently high-quality background buildings and the occasional subdued feature building, such as Toronto’s Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts. It’s no crime—an oblique compliment, actually—to say that their work will never be mistaken for celebrity architecture. Their importance in city-building is widely recognized across Canada. But it’s irksome to go through the book’s concise analyses and small black-and-white photos of “iconic” structures (such as Bucky Fuller’s geodesic dome and Libeskind’s ROM extension), and then suddenly get blasted by page after page after page of huge colour photographs showcasing Diamond & Schmitt projects of much lesser renown. The thoughtfulness of their argument against iconism is unfortunately swept away in this tsunami of self-promotion. Maybe they need two separate books, or a more even-handed graphic design, or a more ruthless photo editor. In an inherently awkward hybrid—“part manifesto, part monograph” as the jacket blurb asserts—it’s hard to avoid mixing the message. One day, we might see architects reach a point of quiet power, wherein their discourse will be unclouded by the market-driven need for renown. Until then, *sic transit gloria mundi*: take comfort that all those vacuous celebrity creations won’t stay famous forever. **CA**

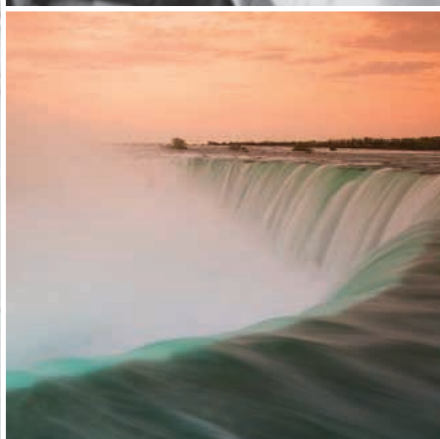
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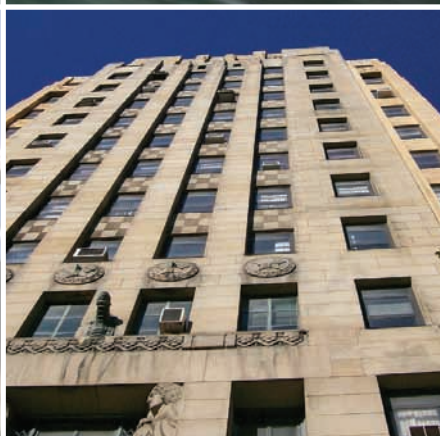
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LEAN AND GREEN



THE CANADA GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL'S FIRST SUMMIT IN TORONTO THIS PAST SUMMER MIGHT AMOUNT TO LITTLE MORE THAN GREENWASH AS WE LOOK TOWARD MORE TANGIBLE RESULTS OF SUSTAINABLE DESIGN.

TEXT MARYBETH MCTEAGUE

The first summit of the Canada Green Building Council (CaGBC) held in Toronto in June was sold out, attracting 1,200 participants representing a broad range from the building industry as well as government, utility and corporate finance officials. The summit could not have been more timely with the announcement the previous week of substantial layoffs at General Motors' Oshawa factory and reports of the disappearance of the honey bee. The simultaneous launch of www.planetgreen.com and the first independent "green" television network in the US is another indicator that the sustainability movement is currently riding a wave of public and corporate awareness. The summit theme of "Shifting into the Mainstream" was clearly appropriate.

Founded in 2001, the CaGBC (www.cagbc.org) has the express intent of promoting the building industry's potential to cut energy use and significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and pollution, and to conserve water and finite resources. They have set a target of energy and water reductions of 50 percent in over one million homes and 100,000 businesses by 2015, and to

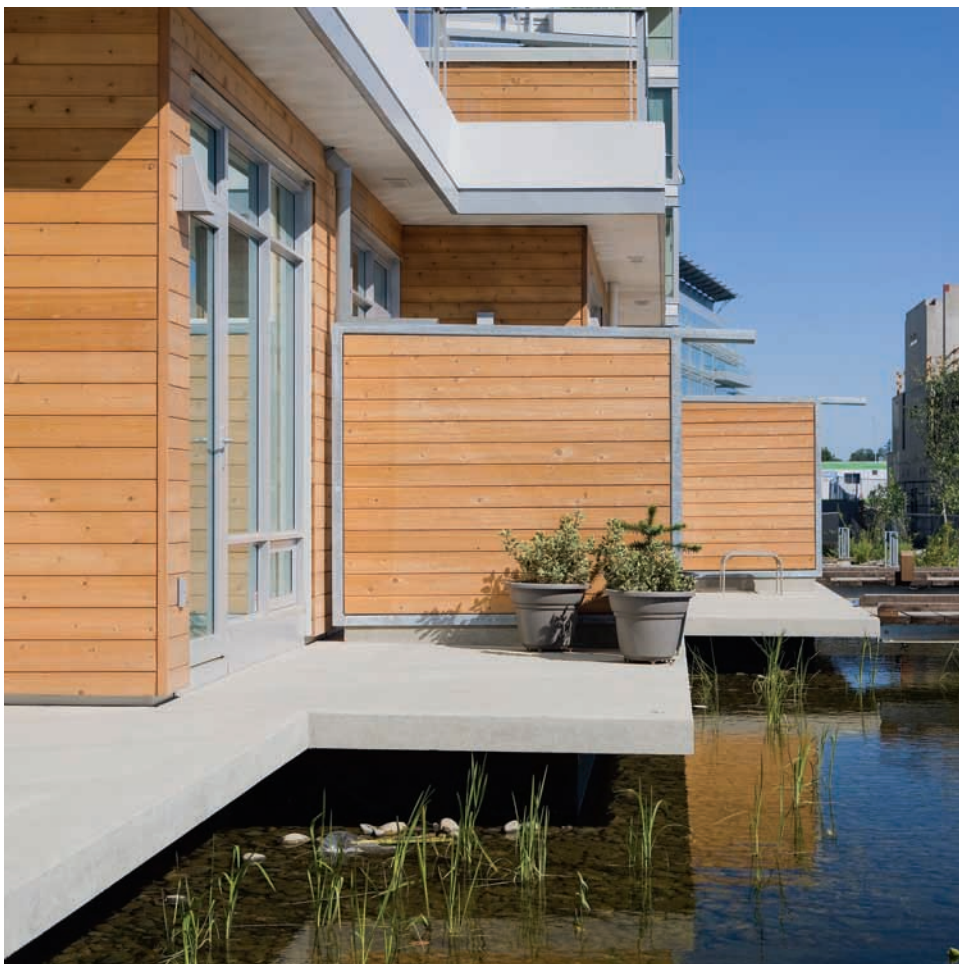
ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT THE RECENTLY COMPLETED DOCKSIDE GREEN IN VICTORIA, BC IS NORTH AMERICA'S FIRST LEED PLATINUM MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING PROJECT; THE PEACEFUL WATERWAY SURROUNDING DOCKSIDE GREEN'S TOWNHOUSES RELIES ON RAIN-WATER COLLECTION; 100 PERCENT OF DOCKSIDE GREEN'S WASTE WATER IS TREATED ON SITE, SOME OF WHICH IS USED FOR FOUNTAINS AND OTHER DESIGNED WATER FEATURES.

have carbon-neutral buildings by 2030. The Council has adapted the US Green Building Council's system of LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) for rating the sustainability of buildings as well as providing a green credential through the LEED AP certification exam. Rating systems have been developed for single-family houses, multiple-family dwellings, mixed-use buildings, commercial buildings and institutions. Recent additions include the Green Building Performance Initiatives to improve the performance of existing commercial and institutional buildings as well as assessments for neighbourhood development, leased space, campuses and multiple buildings. LEED ratings address issues of climate change through energy consumption, resource depletion (materials), air quality, water efficiency, sustainable siting and location, as well as innovation and design. LEED is being redeveloped to include the life cycle of buildings, carbon footprints, and other categories such as social equity and respect for community and culture. There are currently 3,609 accredited professionals and more than 400 registered projects in Canada.

The CaGBC was modelled on the US Green

Building Council which now has 15,700 member organizations and 74 chapters. Twenty-five states and 100 cities and municipal councils are now using LEED standards for their buildings. There are 53,000 accredited professionals and over 25,000 buildings registered or in line for registration with LEED. Most recent is the inauguration of the World Green Building Council which has 70 members including China and India. Kevin Hydes, CaGBC chair, spoke of the commitment to protect the three sacred elements of water, land and air, to inspire best practice in the building industry, and to recognize that as this industry employs 100 million people worldwide, there are significant challenges and goals for achieving global sustainability. Unlike Canada, China has introduced a mandatory energy-labelling system for all new buildings. One of the key issues being addressed is fragmentation in the building industry, which is a barrier to the integration of sustainability.

The summit was preceded by the CaGBC's sixth annual education day for "greening the curriculum" for post-secondary education. It was emphasized that as with buildings, sustainability has to be integral to the curriculum and not merely



ENRICO DAGOSTINI



VINCE KLASSEN

tacked on as an extra. McGill University's Daniel Pearl, a founding member of the CaGBC, articulated that sustainability needs to be part of any ethically responsible curriculum. The theme of an integrated design process underscored the presentations, indicating that collaboration by all team members from project conception is essential to achieving sustainability in every facet and at every stage of a project.

Keynote speaker Trevor Butler of the aptly named UK firm Archineer, emphasized team and community collaboration in his work with BDP (Building Design Partnership) and in projects with Richard Kroeker at Dalhousie University, where an integrated design approach has resulted in the Pictou Landing Health Centre and the Yellow Pages Building. Butler was one of several speakers to state that sustainability was as much about reducing carbon footprints as it was about sustaining community and culture and the creation of beauty.

Paul van Geel spoke of Carleton University's commitment to the integrated design process through the restructuring of its curriculum to create core courses based on sustainable principles, which are to be taken by both architects and engineers. Wendy Wilson, a Fanshawe College English teacher, enlisted multidisciplinary students to collaborate on a sustainable building book. Ted Rosen reported that in 2006, Centennial Community College relaunched its architect-

tural technology program with sustainability integrated into every facet of the curriculum. Students have increasingly taken a lead role, and Arlene Gould of York University reported a student-initiated retrofit of a campus building which was integrated into course work. Chantal Cornu of the University of Waterloo led other students in the Grand House Student Co-operative project which took the work of Rural Studio as its precedent. The project process involved working with the community and local builders, and provided on-site training and work for the locally unemployed.

The main summit sessions were devoted to reports from various client groups, developers, builders, government and utility bodies on their sustainable initiatives and their experiences with LEED. These included Toronto Mayor David Miller, BC Minister of Housing Rick Coleman, and Gerry Rose, representing Manitoba Hydro, which introduced smart meters as early as 1989.

The summit's co-chairs, Michael Brookes of the Real Property Association of Canada and Alan Greenberg of Minto, a development corporation whose interests in sustainable developments stretch back to the Innova House in 1992, celebrated with other corporate representatives regarding their various successes in achieving LEED status. They all agreed that sustainability is a necessary tool for reducing costs as well as marketing purposes. It is also part of the new

corporate ethic of social responsibility which has a triple bottom line of economic, ecological and social factors.

This was evident in the heartfelt statements of developer Joe Van Bellegham of Windmill West and Three Point Properties, who revealed how the experience of working on Victoria's Dockside Green had changed his values. Dockside Green will save 70 million gallons of water a year and provide new community opportunities. Rediscovering a new sense of purpose, Van Bellegham encouraged banks not to lend to non-ecological projects, architects to refuse clients who are not embracing ecological principles, and politicians to muster the courage to take a stand.

Peter Busby of Busby Perkins + Will and current chair and founding member of the CaGBC, sets a high standard for architects in his commitment to sustainable practice in Vancouver. His range of projects extend from Vento, the first LEED Platinum multi-family housing project in North America, to Dockside Green, the first carbon-neutral community development in Canada, to the EcoDensity Project—which through the strategic use of a reconfigured public transport system and changes in zoning—could dramatically decrease the per capita carbon footprint of Vancouver.

Throughout the presentations, problems with LEED were cited, such as the limits inherent in the scoring and the need to provide credits for



ABOVE THE SPECTACULAR VIEWS AFFORDED FROM DOCKSIDE GREEN'S ROOFTOP TERRACE.

other sustainable features such as passive ventilation. The cost and difficulty of achieving LEED certification could be prohibitive. For example, when the cost of certification for a community recreation centre was estimated to be \$100,000, the client, a government body, chose to divert those funds to other more pressing needs. Another difficulty is understanding the differences between LEED and other systems such as R2000, Energy Star and the Net Zero Energy program. Energy Star as a product is more widely recognized by the general public. A further difficulty is that the Canadian Home Builders' Association does not support LEED for homes. It is hoped that in the interest of clarity as well as public recognition, these different systems might be integrated into a single entity. At the institutional and commercial level, there is a call for greater emphasis on monitoring post-occupancy building performance to determine if LEED criteria are being met, and the need to educate building managers and occupants. Others argue there should be more government incentives such as tax abatements, density bonuses or planning trades for sustainability initiatives. There is the question too of the significance of LEED given that to achieve LEED certification, a project only needs to achieve 26 out of 70 points, and for Platinum status, 52 out of 70 points.

While the politicians emphasized political goodwill in their commitment to the goal of fighting climate change, most other speakers—and indeed one whole session—focused on the economic payback, indicating that without this, the

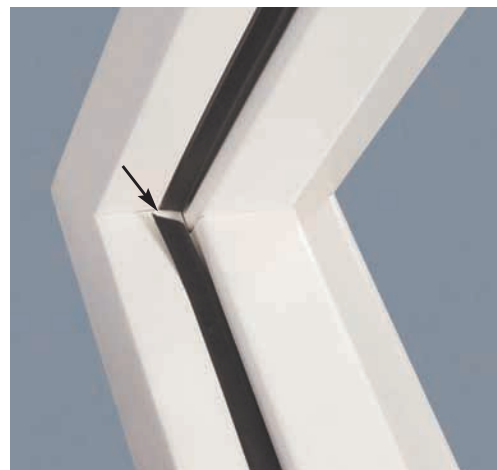
incentive would be lacking to pursue a sustainable agenda. The wind was completely taken out of their sails by the electrifying, intelligent and compelling presentation by Dr. David Suzuki, who demanded that the economic parameters be redefined, reminding us that economics and ecology have the same root word “eco” from the Greek *oikos* meaning “home.” He was astounded that green buildings still have to be justified on economic terms, when the crux of the matter is the effect on nature itself. The problem is the perspective, which sees humans as the most important thing on earth, and continuous economic growth as the primary goal not only of business but of government. He challenged us to find the sense of urgency in this current crisis, which in the past has led to effective action in meeting such crises as Pearl Harbour and the space race. “How much stuff do we need?” he exclaimed, stating that it was suicide to cling to current notions and policies of growth when we are currently facing 1,000 ecological Pearl Harbours. The impact on the audience was best summarized by Alan Greenberg's response to one of Suzuki's metaphors, “Now I feel like bacteria!”

How do we sustain that moment of revelation, a kind of baptism into new life and perspective, and not let it subside into just another instance of more greenwash? How is it to be a significant tsunami and not just a market-driven tide of fashion? Because we have been here before with the 1987 Brundtland Report defining sustainability, the 1988 Toronto Global Warming conference, and in the wake of the OPEC oil crisis, the

1977 Franklin Report urging Canada to invest in renewable energy. Instead, Canada is currently the biggest per-capita energy consumer in the world. The week after the conference *The Globe and Mail* reported on the results of the quarterly C-Suite Survey, which indicates that in contrast to 2007 results, the business community does not see climate change as very important or very urgent. As the 2008 G8 summit opened, early reports indicate that only Canada and the US are unwilling to agree to set mid-term targets for reducing emissions.

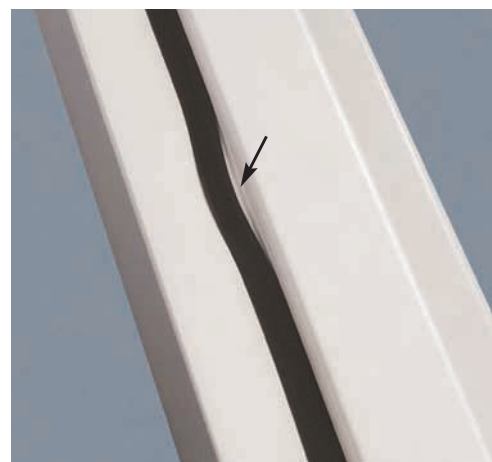
These current realities underline the necessity of the conference theme, “Shifting into the Mainstream.” The CaGBC has created two frameworks within which sustainable building can be achieved. Perhaps these initiatives should no longer be voluntary but mandatory, building codes should be veritably green, and professional accreditation for schools and practitioners should be granted only when sustainable targets have been met. In his closing remarks, conviction and urgency breaking his speech, Thomas Mueller, President and CEO of the CaGBC, urged that without the implementation of policies and practices, the consequences would be dire. **CA**

Marybeth McTeague is an architect, architectural historian and a member of the CaGBC. She teaches at the University of Toronto and Ryerson University.



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FOSSIL JEWELS



A CENTRE FOR FOSSIL RESEARCH AND DISPLAY IN JOGGINS EVOKES THE HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT OF THE REGION, RECENTLY DESIGNATED AS A UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE.

PROJECT JOGGINS FOSSIL CENTRE, JOGGINS, NOVA SCOTIA
ARCHITECT WHW ARCHITECTS INC.
TEXT JOHN LEROUX
PHOTOS CRAIG MOSHER

When does the inspiration for a great building's design truly begin? Does its genesis lie within the web of initial programming and budgetary constraints, or is it a physical embodiment of purpose and spirit of place? In the case of the Joggins Fossil Centre on Nova Scotia's Bay of Fundy coast, the inspiration has been over 300 million years in the making.

The Joggins Fossil Cliffs, Canada's most recently designated UNESCO World Heritage Site, consists of the powerful geological edge between the mighty Bay of Fundy and the sleepy town of Joggins, a once-thriving coal-mining community. The sloping cliffs are the world's most comprehensive fossil record of life during the Carboniferous period, better known as the Coal Age, between 290 and 360 million years ago. As the world's highest tides consistently pound the rock face, the incessant erosion periodically reveals new examples of fossil life within the stratified layers. This ever-changing state makes the 16-kilometre-long fossil cliffs a world-renowned and active destination for scientists, paleontologists, and those who simply



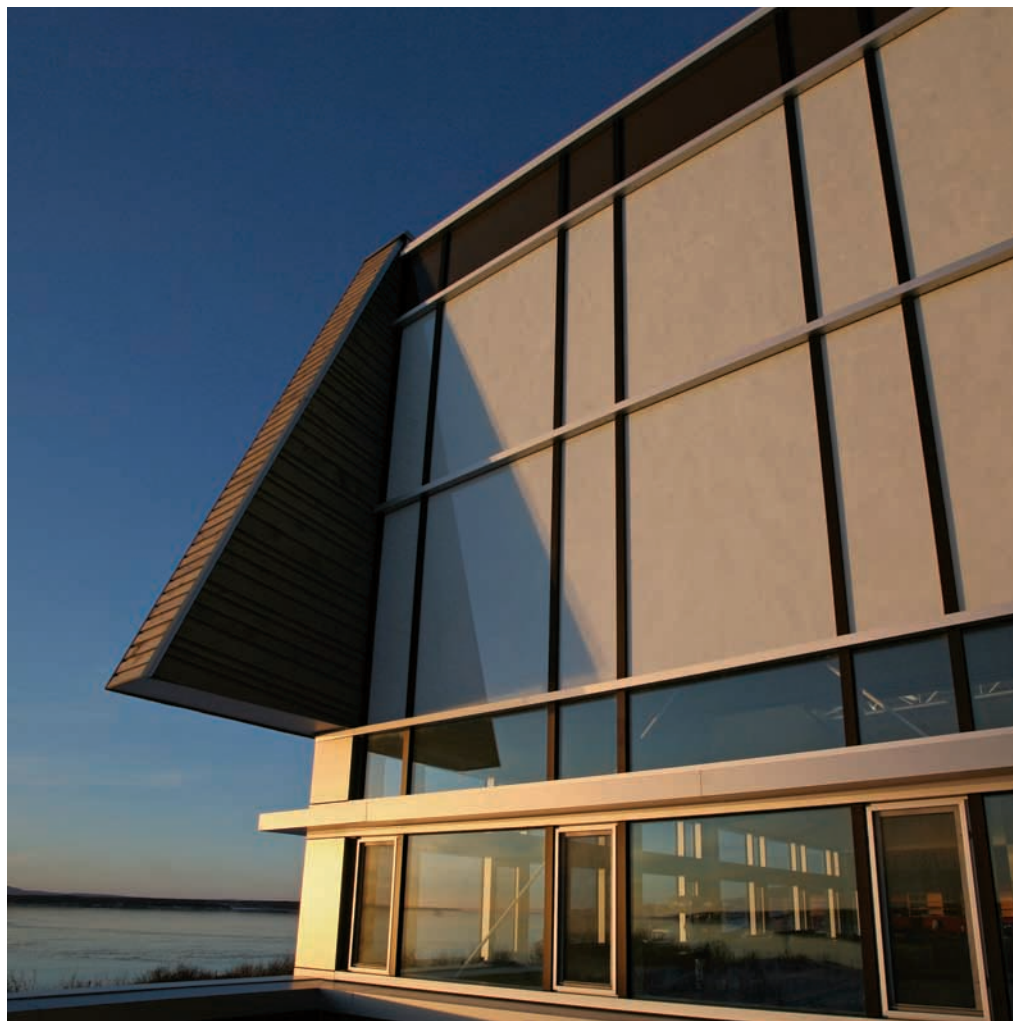
love to stroll the stunning location.

WHW Architects of Halifax were selected as the prime consultants, and were given a rare opportunity that began as a genuinely blank slate. Rather than having a program dictated by the client, the architects were encouraged to determine the best building solution through dialogue and discussions among the local stakeholders and the wider design team which included environmental engineers, archaeologists, a business planning consultant, and interpretive planners and designers. The ensuing theme of “The Power of the Cliffs” became the underlying concept of the Centre’s architectural solution and the stimulating interpretive displays within. The theme was expanded into three interconnected sub-themes that established the project’s design direction: Cliffs—rock, massive, angular; Time—300,000,000 years of time, inexorable and linear; Water—life-giving, erosion-driving, swirling.

While such a rich site narrative had the potential to overwhelm the archi-

OPPOSITE, LEFT TO RIGHT VISITORS CAN LOOK RIGHT THROUGH THE NEW FOSSIL CENTRE AND OUT TOWARD THE BAY OF FUNDY; THE NEW INTERPRETATION CENTRE’S LOW-RISE PROFILE AND GREEN ROOF BLENDS INTO JOGGINS’S AGRICULTURAL MARITIME LANDSCAPE.

tectural solution or promote an egocentric building that would dominate the landscape, the Centre is exceptionally well executed in scale, material and metaphor. The single-storey building face that welcomes the public is an angled surface clad in local olive-brown Wallace sandstone, mimicking the similarly sloping fossil cliffs rising from the rocky beach below. While the other façades combine grooved wood siding (in a similar olive-brown tone and inclined pattern) with extended horizontal ribbons of aluminum windows, they are equally successful in their dialogue with the cliffs. By using layers of varying clapboard widths with deep shadow reveals, the design establishes a playful and suitable cladding language that speaks to the geol-



ogy underfoot as well as to the local building tradition of wood siding.

The chronicle of the site also includes substantial coal mining, an industrial history which is intimately connected to both the region's fossil abundance and the saga of the town itself—from populated prosperity to the more recent obsolescence and exodus. The mines existed from the mid-17th century until 1961, and the cultural/physical legacy of the site's extraction of coal is closely tied with the geology of the cliffs. With this tradition in mind, the tectonic language of the Centre's heavy-timber entrance canopy and lobby roof evokes the post-and-beam mining structure that once stood in this very spot, following the strata of the underground coal seams. The remarkable and long demolished construction held back subterranean stone walls, culminating above grade in an angled wooden mine-head framework that resembled a Coney Island rollercoaster from a century ago.

Ron Burdock, the project's design architect, fittingly states that "the

TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT THE NEW JOGGINS FOSSIL CENTRE IS PERCHED HIGH ABOVE WORLD-FAMOUS FOSSIL-LADEN CLIFFS; VISITORS CAN ENJOY VIEWS TOWARD THE BAY OF FUNDY WHILE ATTENDING EVENTS IN THE NEW MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM. **ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT** MUSEUM INSTALLATIONS HELP MAKE THE EXPERIENCE OF LEARNING ABOUT LIFE DURING THE CARBONIFEROUS PERIOD CAPTIVATING FOR ALL AGES.

building is the first 'cliff' that visitors see when they arrive in the village, at first hidden and then revealed, just as the cliffs are. Situated so as to form a portal to the beach where the fossils can be seen emerging from the cliffs above, the cliff form of the centre splits—as if it were a geological fault—to offer an entrance."

The plan of the building is simple and appropriate, with the entry and main corridor forming a long angled axis or "fault line" with the spaces for



TOP THE ANGLED WALLS OF THE NEW FOSSIL CENTRE WERE INSPIRED BY THE LAYERED ROCK CLIFFS BEYOND. **ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT** GREEN ROOFS AND PHOTOVOLTAIC PANELS HELP CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROJECT, IN ADDITION TO LOWERING OPERATING COSTS.

year-round use on one side (offices, labs) and seasonal spaces for public use on the other (exhibit rooms). This allows the building to be zoned for efficient climate control when public demand is low. As a counterpoint to the mainly rectilinear lines of the building footprint, curved walls form swirls and eddies along the lobby, animating the spaces where visitors and the Centre staff interact, such as the gift shop and café. In Burdock's view, these suggest the organic forms of the fossils preserved in the stone, as well as the flow of water—a substance “that gave rise to life, brought the sediments that laid down the fossils and, through the action of the Bay of Fundy

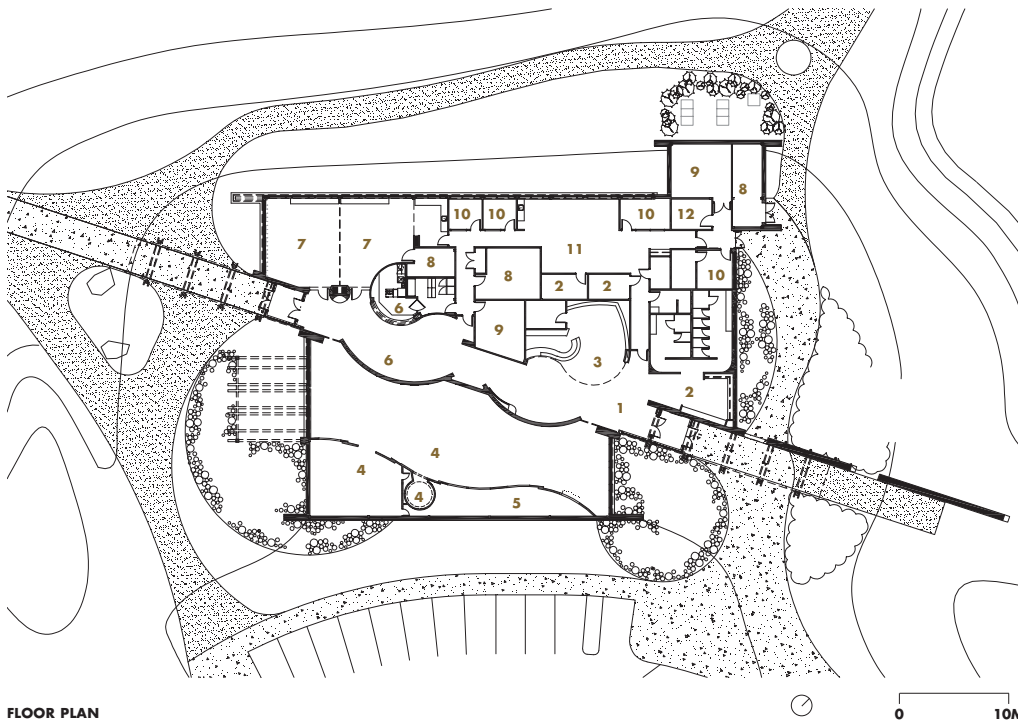
tides, exposes the fossil record.”

With the environmental and economic realities of the locally owned facility, of great importance was the integration of alternate energy technologies which will provide up to two-thirds of the Centre's energy needs. The architects also embraced the ironic chance to revisit how fossil fuels were used in an interpretive centre for Coal Age fossils. Green strategies include a vegetated roof, recycled materials, a 50-kilowatt wind turbine generator, a solar water-heating system, waterless urinals and Solera glazing in the high north and south walls that diffuses daylight, reduces glare, protects the collection from high light levels, and provides improved insulation performance.

A conscious direction of avoiding superfluous finishes was followed; a strategy that minimized cost, material use and embedded energy. These include an exposed steel truss roof system within the exhibition areas and exposed concrete floors. The latter has two sets of local creatures' fossil

BAY OF
FUNDY

SITE PLAN



FLOOR PLAN

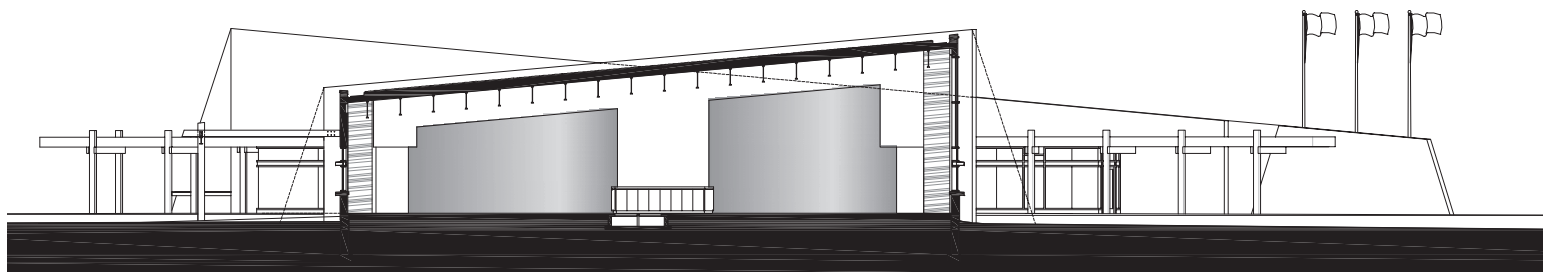
CLIENT CUMBERLAND REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION/JOGGINS FOSSIL INSTITUTE ASSOCIATION
ARCHITECT TEAM JOHN CRACE, RON BURDOCK, JONATHAN CAR-MICHAEL, LISA TONDINO, DAVID PHILLIPS, IAN MILLER, KARON COFFIN, BRIAN COLGAN
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tracks sandblasted in the slab, much to the delight of visiting children.

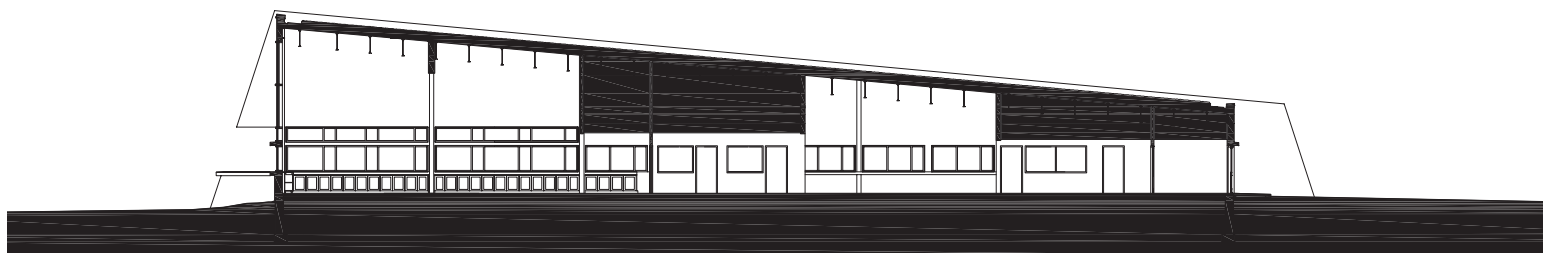
In 1836, noted geologist and inventor of kerosene Abraham Gesner called the Joggins Fossil Cliffs “the place where the delicate herbage of a former world is now transmuted in stone.” It is entirely fitting that WHW Architects have taken the essence and wonder that absorbed Gesner over 170 years ago to similarly transmute the ancient world of stone into a contemporary and vibrant work of architecture. As one of the world’s only locally owned and operated UNESCO World Heritage Sites, the Joggins Fossil Centre recently received a Nova Scotia Association of Architects’ Lieutenant Governor’s Medal of Excellence, and is apt to capture many more honours in the near future. **CA**

John Leroux, AANB, MRAIC is an architect and journalist based in Saint John, New Brunswick.

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- 2 COATS/WASHROOMS
- 3 ADMISSIONS/GIFT SHOP
- 4 EXHIBIT
- 5 TECHNICAL SPACE
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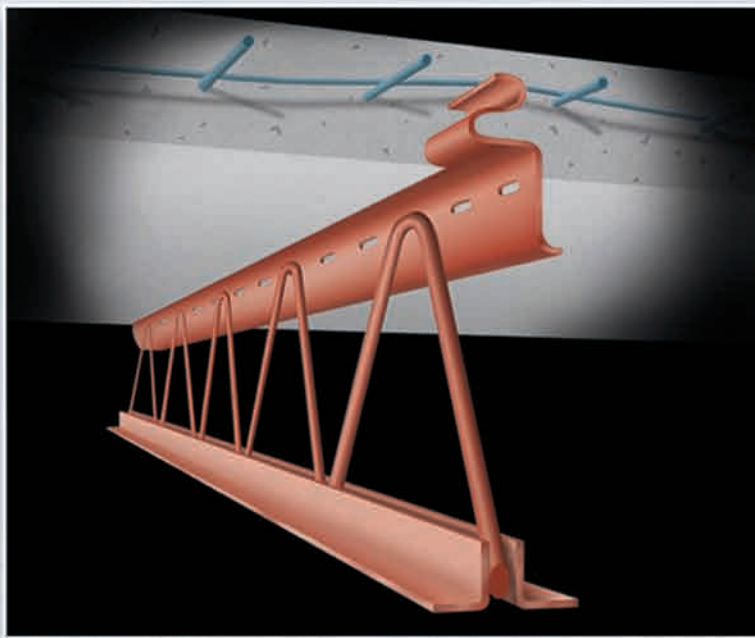


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INTRIGUING NOTIONS OF ANTICIPATORY INFRASTRUCTURE AND IMPRINTABILITY INFORM THE ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN PROCESS OF A CALGARY FIRM.

TEXT LESLIE JEN
PHOTOS RON CHOE

It's probably safe to say that some of the more interesting architectural practices in existence today are led by individuals who combine professional practice with teaching and academic life. The Marc Boutin Architectural Collaborative is no exception, with Marc Boutin enjoying the best of both worlds in balancing academic pursuits as an Associate Professor of Architecture at the University of Calgary Faculty of Environmental Design with practice as the principal and founder

of the Marc Boutin Architectural Collaborative (MBAC). A small design studio that actively explores cultural issues related to the contemporary city, MBAC is involved in a broad spectrum of projects of varying scales, but a significant portion of the practice centres on residential design.

Here, four houses illustrate an ongoing process that the collaborative continues to evolve, and through which a narrative can be traced. The

conceptual drive behind these houses is the notion of anticipatory infrastructure or an open-ended formal neutrality in the design, an imprintability that accepts rather than dictates the activity within. This conscious neutrality is like a blank canvas, and the architecture becomes a conduit for the understanding of phenomena rather than a mere representation of it. Having moved to Calgary over a decade ago, Boutin has been struck by the potency and dynamism of the endless prairie sky. He describes it as a living thing, the shifts in light, shade and colour that have a transformative effect on architecture. To maximize this expression of Western Canadian climactic phenomena, Boutin has employed an intentionally restrained formal strategy of orthogonal geometries, planar elements, and simple overlapping volumes, in keeping with elemental Corbusian gestures of open floor plans with double-height living spaces and large expanses of glazing. In Boutin's view, the dictatorial constraints of an overwrought, fetishized and convoluted architecture do not permit the subtle unfolding of environmental phenomena and the natural rhythms of human activity.

Located on 72 acres of pristine land dotted with fir and pine trees, the Frame House is a family home perched on a ridge above the town of Invermere, British Columbia. As its name would suggest, the house in essence operates as a massive frame capturing the spectacular and majestic view of the mountains. There is an obvious dichotomy between the opaque, solid and impervious quality at the rear of the house and the completely open transparency of the front, as it turns its back to the noise and traffic of the highway to the north while celebrating the landscape to the south, encouraging visual and physical interaction with the outdoors through an operable glazed façade. Unlike the houses of Canadian practitioners Ian MacDonald and the Patkaus, the house makes no attempt to embed itself into its site as an organic outcropping; instead, it proudly stands as an object in the landscape, presenting a monolithic and powerful statement in its rugged natural context.

In fulfilling the clients' desire for a house that brings the family together, MBAC's design solution offers a straightforward plan with sufficient openness and flexibility to accept change and adaptability over time. The design also draws on the imprintability notion, creating a neutral background that draws meaning through the continuously shifting conditions of site and place. Conceptually, three formal gestures define the project: after careful analysis of the property, a cut into the ground establishes the siting of the house; a hard landscaping surface forms a "liner" for the project, acting as a threshold between interior and exterior space while strategically



OPPOSITE A WALL OF OPERABLE GLAZING OPENS ONTO THE EXPANSIVE DECK OF THE FRAME HOUSE IN INVERMERE, BC AND CAPTURES VIEWS OF THE SPECTACULAR MOUNTAINS IN THE DISTANCE.

ABOVE THE RELATIVE OPACITY OF THE NORTH ELEVATION OF THE FRAME HOUSE IS VIEWED AGAINST THE VAST WESTERN CANADIAN SKY. **RIGHT** A VIEW OF THE FRAME HOUSE STILL UNDER CONSTRUCTION ILLUSTRATES THE CONCRETE AND STONE FOUNDATIONS UNDERPINNING THE WOOD UNDERBELLY OF THE HOVERING TWO-STORY MASS. **BOTTOM RIGHT** A MODEL OF THE HOUSE SUGGESTS THE ENTIRETY OF THE STRUCTURE IN THE CONTEXT OF ITS GENTLY SLOPING SITE.

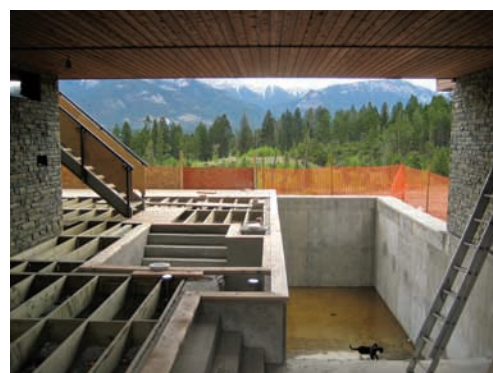
positioning outdoor recreational spaces to receive the sun; and lastly, a hovering two-storey trussed frame gathers the program spaces into a single volume, visually connecting them all to the surrounding landscape through the vast glazed curtain wall.

Public and private considerations are explored in the spatial relationships of the house; as such, the master suite is located on the uppermost mezzanine level, overlooking the double-height public living/dining area, and the children's bedrooms also enjoy a degree of privacy, grouped in a cluster at the eastern wing of the house's main floor.

Clad in stained cedar siding, the prominence of the frame is enhanced by the deep overhang on the south façade, which permits low winter sun to

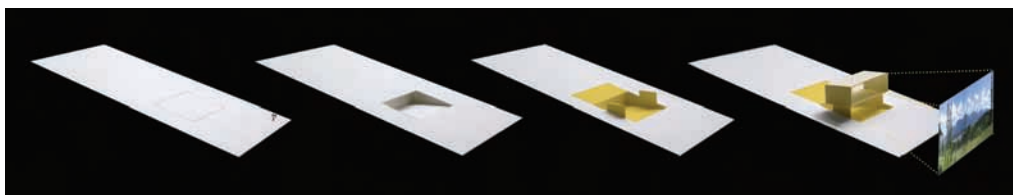
illuminate and warm the depths of the house in the cold dark months while protecting the interior from excessive solar gain during the summer. Operable windows and skylights provide plenty of natural ventilation, as do the 18-foot-high sliding doors connecting interior and exterior social spaces on both the main and lower levels, which open to the outdoor patio, swimming pool, hot tub and the mountains.

A precursor to the Frame House was the Truss House, which was commissioned as a full-time home for a writer on Pender Island, British Columbia. Incorporating the notion of anticipatory infrastructure, the house was designed with sufficient flexibility to accommodate the writer's son and her grandchildren during the summer vacation season. From a philosophical desire to





TOP THE ENTIRELY GLAZED FRONT FAÇADE OF THE FRAME HOUSE IS ORIENTED TO CAPTURE OPTIMAL SOUTHERN LIGHT AS WELL AS THE PREDOMINANT MOUNTAIN VIEW. **ABOVE** MATERIAL CONTINUITY APPARENT IN THE CEDAR SIDING EXTENDING FROM THE INTERIOR WALL SURFACE TO THE EXTERIOR CLADDING OF THE DEEP OVERHANGING FRAME EMPHASIZES THE INTEGRATION OF INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR SPACES. **BELOW** A RENDERING INDICATES THE CONCEPTUAL STAGES OF THE DESIGN: A CUT INTO THE GROUND ESTABLISHES THE SITING OF THE HOUSE, FOLLOWED BY THE CONSTRUCTION OF A HARDCAPED LINER, AND FINALLY, THE RAISED TWO-STOREY FRAME THAT CAPTURES DISTANT VIEWS.



CONCEPT MODEL

explore the relationship between technical and formal ideas, the conceptually intriguing idea of the inhabited truss emerged. The client's wish to preserve all trees and natural vegetation on this remote site meant a minimally invasive approach and the development of the simplest of structures—four columns support this inhabited truss, lifting the mass off the ground. The seductively clean design speaks clearly of the building's technical framework and the function of the truss.

Characterized by magnificent arbutus trees, rocky outcroppings and a view of the ocean, the Pacific Northwest landscape is acknowledged in this project, and view-framing devices are developed throughout. Sectionally, three data are addressed in the design: the contained upper volume is focused on the distant view of the ocean; clerestory windows and a louvered skin horizontally frame the verticality of the tree trunks on three sides of the ground floor; and the fourth elevation is oriented towards one giant arbutus tree in particular, while also directly engaging the immediate ground cover of rock, bark, moss, water and earth.

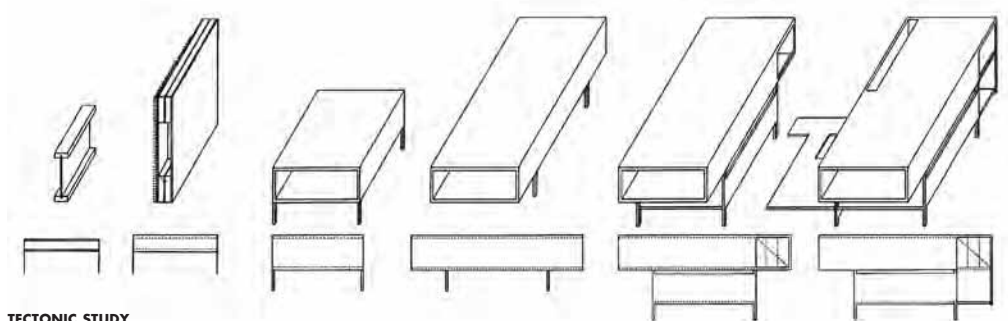
Sadly, though the project was never built, the wood model and drawings featured here are illustrative of the rigour that MBAC applies to the design process. For the Truss House, the process included an impressive array of tectonic study diagrams, site plan analyses and sectional drawings that serve to clarify the conceptual intent underlying the design. Furthermore, in a time when firms rely more and more on increasingly sophisticated software programs that result in strangely synthetic renderings of buildings, the collaborative still builds cardboard and wood study models, not only as an effective communication device for clients but as an authentic way of developing a process from which the real effects of light, shadow and form emerge. Moreover, the monochromatic qualities of the models retain and convey the purity of form most effectively, particularly in the increasingly complex formal strategies employed in the subtractive carving-out process to create solids and voids, positive and negative space, and the integrative relationships between interior and exterior.

This subtractive manipulation is seen in the Sims House, located in an inner-city Calgary neighbourhood. Designed for a couple and their two children, the house was conceived as a box containing private spaces for family life on the top floor while also incorporating more extroverted spaces in the main-floor program. Consequently, the volume is manipulated through a subtractive and sometimes additive process, where strategically placed erosions and extru-

FRAME HOUSE, INVERMERE, BRITISH COLUMBIA

CLIENT WITHHELD
ARCHITECT TEAM MARC BOUTIN, MAURICIO ROSA, JERRY HACKER, MIKE DEBOER, SEAN KNIGHT, RON CHOE
STRUCTURAL CASCADE ENGINEERING GROUP
CONTRACTOR NORCON DEVELOPMENTS
AREA 4,500 FT²
COMPLETION APRIL 2008

RIGHT, TOP TO BOTTOM TECTONIC STUDY DIAGRAMS ILLUSTRATE NOTIONS OF AN INHABITED TRUSS; A WOOD MODEL OF THE TRUSS HOUSE REVEALS THE ELEGANT SIMPLICITY OF THE STRUCTURE; A SITE PLAN OF THE TRUSS HOUSE SUGGESTS THE DYNAMIC TOPOGRAPHY AND REMOTENESS OF THE SITE; SECTIONAL STUDY DRAWINGS INDICATE THE DESIRE TO PRESERVE ALL NATURAL VEGETATION ON THE SITE THROUGH THE QUASI-CORBUSIAN NOTION OF PILOTIS THAT LIFT THE STRUCTURE OFF THE GROUND.



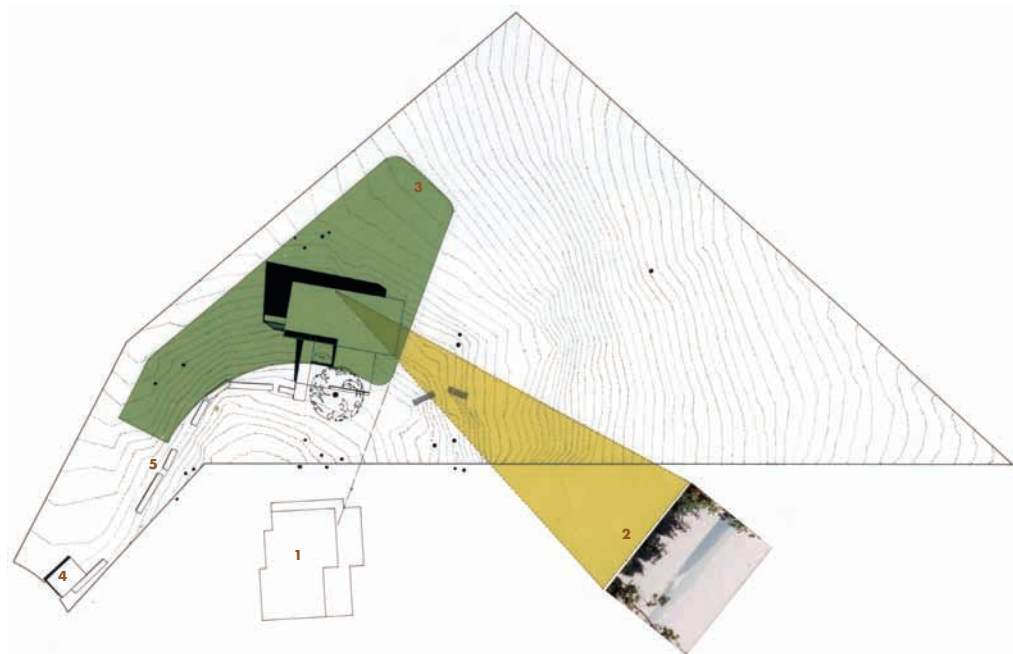
TECTONIC STUDY

sions in the form create visual connections and linkages between the spaces. Devices like the skylit double-height atrium over the dining area bring light deep into the interior of the house, and strategically placed openings create framed views of the enclosed gardens and connections to the vivid and constantly changing sky.

Stacking the larger comparatively solid mass of the second-storey box on top of the smaller transparent one effectively frees up additional public space underneath, creating three walled gardens, one at the front of the house and one at the rear, and a sizeable south-facing courtyard garden running parallel to the length of the house. As the façades of the ground floor are primarily glazed, its parameters appear dematerialized, further contributing to the illusion of a hovering or levitating upper-floor volume, while also increasing the connection between interior and exterior space.

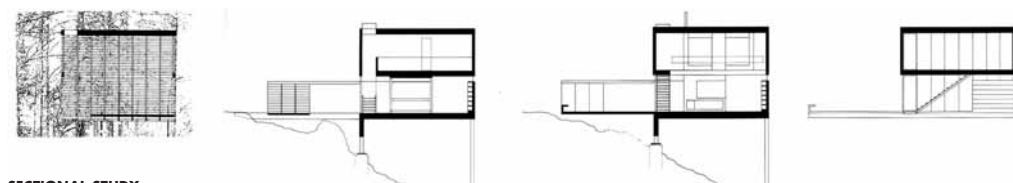
As Calgary's building costs were rapidly escalating during the period of the house's construction, any extraneous features were stripped from the design. MBAC's strict adherence to the established budget meant a brutally straightforward design, the result of which is "a ruthless expression of the house," according to Boutin. Nevertheless, the house reads as an elegant composition whose simplicity of form is enhanced by a sophisticated and contrasting materiality of concrete, wood, glass and fabric.

Located in the Elboya neighbourhood in southwest Calgary, the Mahallati Lazar House represents, in many ways, the culmination of the formal subtractive strategy employed in many of the earlier houses. While the project has already broken ground, completion is not anticipated until late next year. Where budget constraints kept the Sims House fairly simple and straightforward, the volumetric manipulation in the Mahallati Lazar House is somewhat more complex. It is also the most evolved in terms of material use, exploration and strategy: instead of wood cladding, concrete panel not only wraps the house but folds into it, creating strategically eroded voids that connect the interior spaces to the front and rear yards, and again to the sky. In a complementary gesture, wood millwork has been designed to integrate with the concrete folds, fur-



SITE PLAN

- 1 EXISTING HOUSE
- 2 VIEW CORRIDOR
- 3 ACCESSIBLE LAND WITHIN THE PRIVACY BELT
- 4 CARPORT
- 5 PATH TO HOUSE AND HIKING PARK AT SOUTH END OF PROPERTY



SECTIONAL STUDY

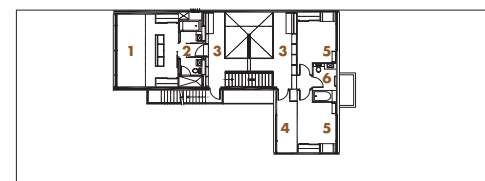
TRUSS HOUSE, PENDER ISLAND, BRITISH COLUMBIA

CLIENT TOM JURENKA
ARCHITECT TEAM MARC BOUTIN, TONY LEONG, DAVE GOLDEN
AREA 2,300 FT²



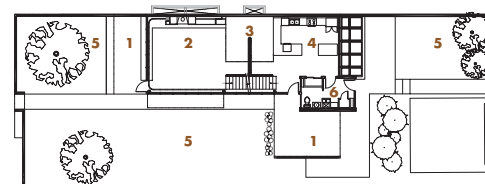
SIMS RESIDENCE, CALGARY, ALBERTA

CLIENT CHRIS AND LANE SIMS
ARCHITECT TEAM MARC BOUTIN, MAURICIO ROSA, JERRY HACKER, MIKE DEBOER, RON CHOE, SEAN KNIGHT
STRUCTURAL MOFFAT ARCHITECTURE + ENGINEERING
LANDSCAPE PLANTA LANDSCAPING
CONTRACTOR MEADOWS SAGE BUILDERS
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COMPLETION APRIL 2008



UPPER FLOOR

- 1 MASTER BEDROOM
- 2 MASTER ENSUITE
- 3 MEZZANINE/LIBRARY
- 4 OFFICE
- 5 BEDROOM
- 6 WASHROOM



MAIN FLOOR

- 1 PATIO (COVERED BY FLOOR ABOVE)
- 2 LIVING AREA
- 3 DINING
- 4 KITCHEN
- 5 GARDEN
- 6 WASHROOM

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE ENTRY INTO THE SIMS HOUSE IS SHELTERED BY THE OVERHANGING SECOND STOREY ABOVE; THE EXTENSIVE GLAZING ON THE GROUND FLOOR OF THE SIMS HOUSE DEMATERIALIZES ITS FORM, CAUSING THE RELATIVE SOLIDITY OF THE SECOND FLOOR TO DOMINATE; THE SKYLIGHT ABOVE THE DOUBLE-HEIGHT DINING ROOM OFFERS PLENTY OF ILLUMINATION FROM THE LIVING CALGARY SKY; A REAL 3D MODEL OF THE SIMS HOUSE IN MONOCHROMATIC TONES ALLOWS FOR GREATER CLARITY AND PURITY OF FORM.

ther delineating the house's interior spaces, pulling the project into a cohesive whole. MBAC have artfully composed opaque and transparent façades that accommodate both privacy concerns and the clients' desire for abundant natural light.

The home is designed for a family of four, with two busy professional parents. Unconventionally, the house is not viewed as a transitional residence with a view towards downsizing and relocation at retirement, but as a house in which the owners can age in place, and where the func-

tions of the spaces within will morph accordingly. The anticipatory infrastructure was established with the clients early on in the project, and diagrams indicate how the spaces will change over time. The crystallization of this idea happened several years earlier, when, as the winner of the Prix de Rome in Architecture in 2002, Boutin's experience of living with his family in an apartment in Rome's Trastevere district taught him valuable lessons in spatial transformation. Comprised of four large equally sized rooms, the

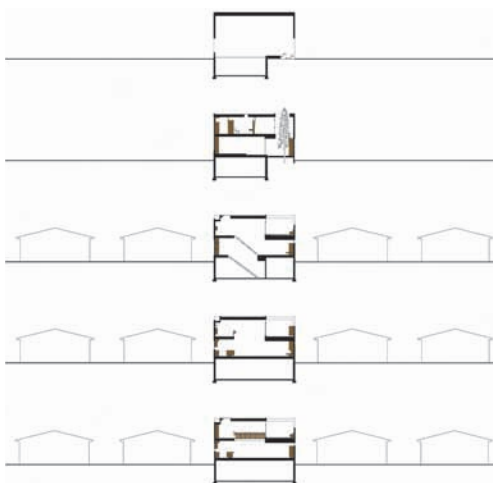


apartment enjoyed a variety of view orientations and qualities of light. The democratic quality of the spaces possessed an implied flexibility, where the work studio and bedroom also functioned as playrooms for Boutin's three young children, and where the living room also accommodated dining functions for the family. Boutin learned that migration across spaces and temporally variable uses were feasible if the spaces were designed properly, taking into account size, orientation and infrastructure. A spectrum of spaces—from social to public to private—can therefore accommodate shifting needs.

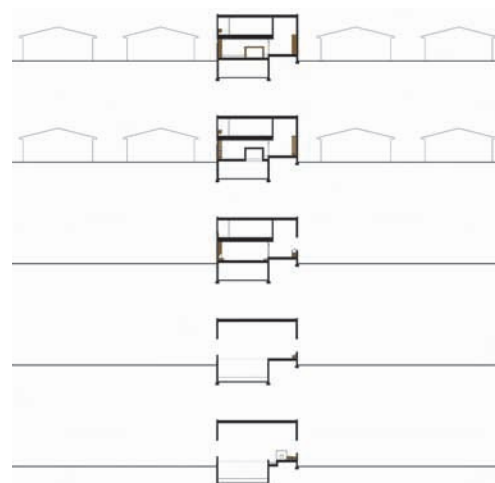
Consequently, flexibility, imprintability, and a gregarious generosity of space is designed into the Mahallati Lazar House from the very outset. Twenty years hence, once the children are grown and the clients become empty nesters, the downstairs zone currently identified for work functions will absorb more general living functions, while the additional bedrooms upstairs can become a work space. The intent is that given the open-ended flexibility of spatial use, people will be able to imprint themselves on and take ownership of the architecture, rather than the other way around.

The work of the Marc Boutin Architectural Collaborative represents another approach to Canadian architecture that is perhaps less site-obsessed than other prominent boutique architecture firms. In contrast to the sexy manipula-

ABOVE THREE RENDERINGS OF THE MAHALLATI LAZAR HOUSE REVEAL THE MOST COMPLEX MANIPULATIONS YET IN THE SUBTRACTIVE PROCESS OF ERODING THE CUBE. **BOTTOM** VIEWED WITHIN THE PARAMETERS OF THE BUILDING'S URBAN SITE, AXONOMETRIC DRAWINGS FROM FOUR DIFFERENT ORIENTATIONS REVEAL THE FORMAL MANIPULATIONS ACHIEVED THROUGH CARVING VOIDS INTO THE ORTHOGONAL VOLUME.



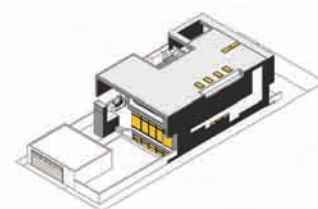
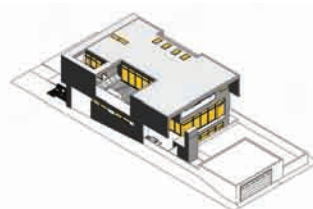
SECTIONAL STUDIES



tions of section so prevalent in the previous decade, Boutin's approach is more universal in its quest for an architecture that behaves as a catalyst for human activity and life, an architecture that is not finite or prescriptive, but one that accepts constantly shifting functions and meanings. **CA**

MAHALLATI + LAZAR HOUSE, CALGARY, ALBERTA

CLIENT HOUMAN MAHALLATI AND DRINA LAZAR
ARCHITECT TEAM MARC BOUTIN, MAURICIO ROSA, JERRY HACKER, MIKE DEBOER, SEAN KNIGHT, RON CHOE
STRUCTURAL GRANT STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING
INTERIORS JOHNSON AND ASSOCIATES INTERIOR DESIGN
CONTRACTOR RAWLYK DEVELOPMENTS
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COMPLETION NOVEMBER 2009



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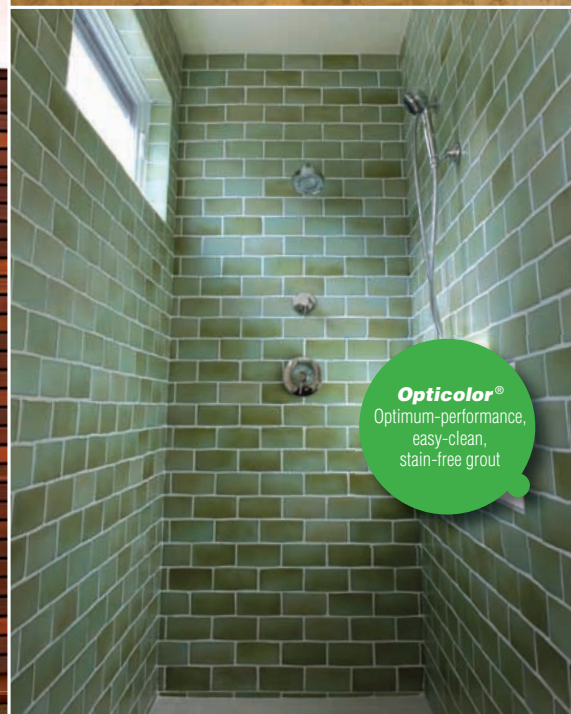
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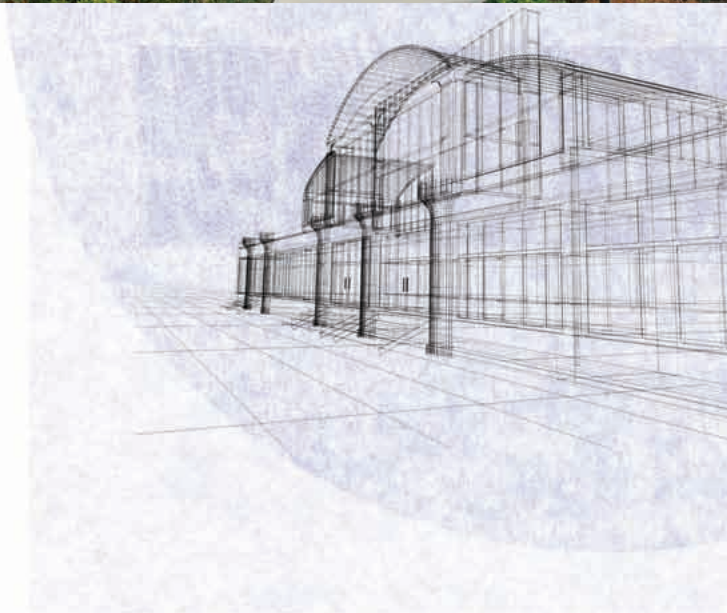
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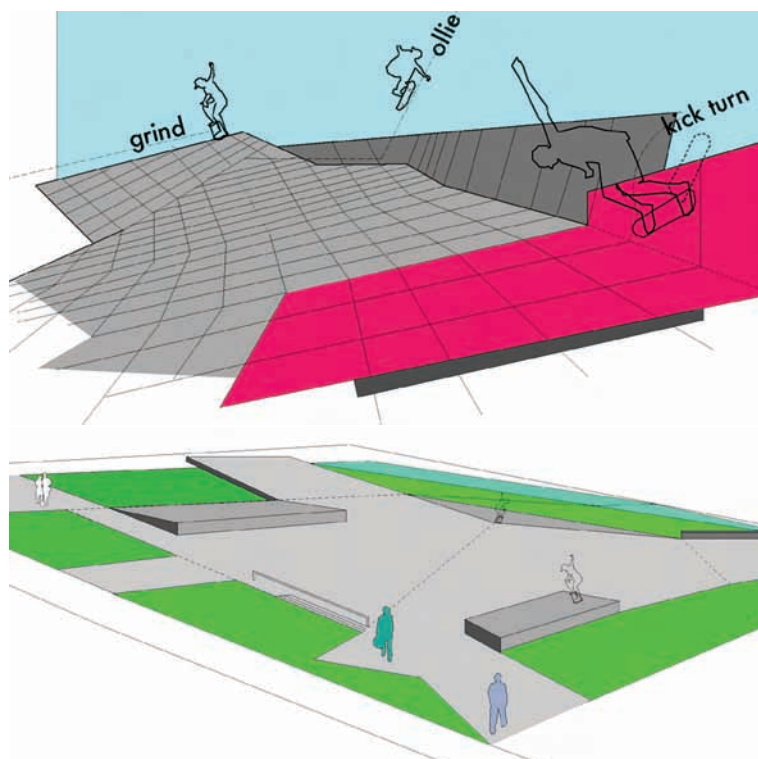
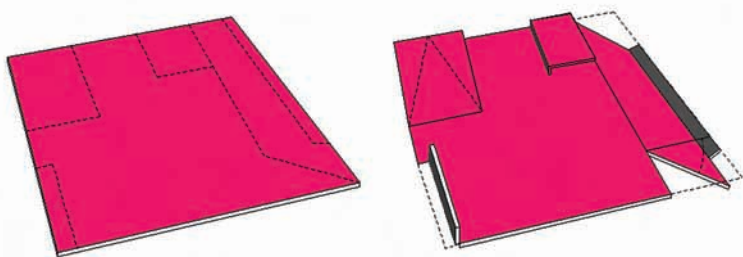
MAKING PLACE



A MONTREAL SKATE PARK CONTINUES TO EVOLVE INTO AN IMPORTANT PUBLIC SPACE FOR THE CITY.

TEXT DAVID THEODORE

PHOTOS J. P. GRENIER



The new skate plaza under Montreal's Jacques Cartier Bridge has been a victim of skateboarders' unreasonable expectations, and a troubling misunderstanding of the architect's role in public projects. Designed by Atelier Big City, this 1,000-square-metre concrete landscape potentially signifies the city's willingness to make a place downtown expressly for young people. It is the first municipal park that skateboarders, BMX riders and inline skaters can use legally. But it had a difficult genesis and absurdly indignant reception from the very people it was built for. Why?

At the root of the controversy is a relationship between the Modernist dream of fluid urban movement and the perceived danger of public areas. As shown in films such as Larry Clark's provocative *Kids* or Spike Jonze's classic *Video Days*, we associate skating with violence, criminal activity and trespassing. Skateboarders zoom through the city as if every place were public space: walls, stairs, curbs, sidewalks, handrails, flowerpots, streets, parking lots. In other words, in an era of bland and branded public space, skateboarding tests the limits of acceptable urban behaviour.

The basic story goes like this. Montreal hired Atelier Big City to find a location downtown suitable for a skate plaza. The firm catalogued over 60 sites. A promising location bridging the underground Ville-Marie Expressway was rejected even after positive public consultations. Finally, the city designated a vacant parking lot dramatically poised under the Jacques Cartier Bridge.

Big City then won the commission to design the actual plaza, too, and included a skate consultant as part of their design team. About a month into the six-week design phase, this consultant, a Montreal-based group called Grind, quit the project. Another skater, Martin Gagnon, offered to help, specifying precise details on how the skating features should be designed: thicknesses, heights, angles. Nevertheless, the rumour persists, repeated often in the press, that there was no expertise on the project—and that there are basic functional errors even a beginner skater wouldn't make. "There

ABOVE, TOP TO BOTTOM AN INITIAL RENDERING OF THE NEW PARK WHICH WAS EVENTUALLY REDUCED IN SIZE DUE TO SAFETY CONCERNS; THE DERIVATION OF THE SKATE PARK'S FINAL PROGRAM AND DESIGN WAS ACHIEVED THROUGH THE HELP OF LOCAL SKATERS. **OPPOSITE** A SKATEBOARDER TRIES OUT THE NEW SKATE PLAZA UNDER THE JACQUES CARTIER BRIDGE.

are probably too many features and gizmos,” says architect Howard Davies, “but they were recommended by the consultants.” When the plaza opened in May 2007, these former consultants denounced it. Grind leader Eric Mercier, who declared publicly that he quit because Big City went “buckwild,” even helped organize a protest.

What they protested is a roughly square-shaped, two-level plaza. Big City took advantage of the need to remove contaminated soil from the site to sink the main skating area about a metre below grade, enabling passersby and skaters to use the park simultaneously. Models show a concept based on manipulating topography, as if the plaza was built from a folded and crimped concrete sheet. The eight-inch-thick insulated concrete has galvanized steel edges—a demanding spec that, along with additional landscaping and lighting requirements, accounts for the \$450,000 construction budget. “The place is built to last,” says Davies.

Drawbacks? The architects were not allowed to use the area directly under the bridge. Coupled with safety precautions preventing activity from spilling onto the sidewalk, and the presence of a giant subway ventilation shaft, this left only about 700 square metres of actual usable area for skating, much less than the 3,000-square-metre plaza in Vancouver or the 4,000-square-metre park in Winnipeg. And the chosen site is a bit of a no-man’s land, not the rich urban crossing originally envisioned. Ironically, given skateboarding’s links to marginal behaviour, some skaters don’t like being close to the street life of Montreal’s gay village.

Herein lies the conundrum. If sometimes skaters are urban lumpenproletariat, more often they are bourgeois suburbanites. Davies opines that perhaps one vocal group of skaters thought they would get a recreational facility, like a community soccer pitch, set apart from street life. For them the plaza’s publicness—which the architects worked hard to achieve—is a disappointment.

So what are public spaces supposed to do in the modern city—and exactly what are people supposed to do in them? Shop? Eat? Play beach volleyball? The skate plaza is yet another recent instance that shows Montrealers uninterested in inhabiting public space. A more prominent example would be the award-winning design for the Quartier International de Montréal, designed by Daoust Lestage/Provencher, Roy et associés. It vastly improved its neighbourhood via a strong interpretation of 19th-century urbanism, but it gives us gardens—respite from urban life, not involvement in it—with no real public place for a rabble-raising speech, for a demonstration, or for skateboarding.



Nevertheless, Davies is hopeful that for future skate parks, the best solution may still be achieved through good architecture combined with less policing. “If I could do this again, I would design a public space—a Big City public space—and let them claim it,” says Davies. “I think the skaters would just take it over.” But get-

ting that to happen would require faith in public space that neither the city nor the skaters seem to possess. **CA**

David Theodore is a regional correspondent for Canadian Architect.



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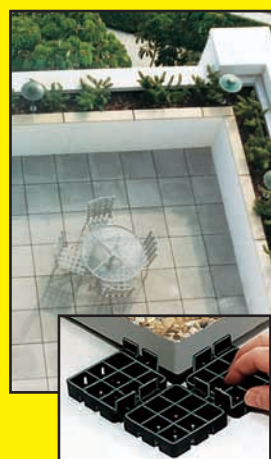
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CALENDAR

Personal Space

September 28, 2008-January 4, 2009
This exhibition at the Architecture Gallery at Harbourfront Centre in Toronto explores the concept of personal space in the design work of Donald Chong Studio, lateral architecture, and NIP paysage, and in the writing of Andrew Westoll.
www.harbourfrontcentre.com

Science Planning Expulsion: The National Socialist General Plan for the East

October 15-December 13, 2008 This exhibition takes place at the Eric Arthur Gallery, John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design at the University of Toronto, and documents the General Plan for the East (GPO) which embodied the Nazi vision for a radical reorganization—racial, spatial, and demographic settlement patterns—of Eastern Europe.
www.chass.utoronto.ca/jiges/gpo-october-2008.pdf

PIG versus CAT: A Meditation About the Rhetoric of Globalization and the Dress of Built Matter

October 21, 2008 Paolo Conrad-Berch, Architect and Visiting Critic, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University presents this lecture at 6:30 pm in Room 103 of the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design, University of Toronto.

Sustaining the Environmental, Social and Economic Life of Cities

October 27, 2008 Susan Weiler of the Olin Partnership in Philadelphia presents the Sheila Baillie Lecture at 6:00 pm in Room G10 of McGill University's Macdonald-Harrington Building in Montreal.

34th Annual Heritage Toronto Awards

October 27, 2008 Heritage Toronto will celebrate outstanding contributions by individuals and community organizations, as well as industry professionals and associations, in promoting and conserving Toronto's history and heritage landmarks. The event begins at 7:30 pm on the 7th floor of the Carlu in Toronto.
www.heritagetoronto.org

Sur les Pavés la Ferme!

October 28, 2008 Work Architecture Company (WORKac) of New York presents this lecture at 6:30 pm in Room 103 of the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design, University of Toronto.

DX Black & White Fundraising Gala

October 30, 2008 This annual event takes place at the Design Exchange in Toronto, featuring an exclusive VIP dinner and party.
www.dx.org/gala/

Integrated Design, From Buildings to Cities

November 4, 2008 Matthias Schuler, partner of Stuttgart's Transsolar Environmental Consultants presents this lecture at 6:30 pm in Room 103 of the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design, University of Toronto.

Mario Botta lecture

November 10, 2008 As part of Carleton University's Azrieli School of Architecture and Urbanism's Forum lecture series, this lecture at Ottawa's National Gallery of Canada is delivered by Mario Botta, arguably the most famous living Swiss architect, who worked as an assistant to both Le Corbusier and Louis I. Kahn.

Tracing Tactile Thought in Teaching Tectonics

November 10, 2008 Romolo Martemucci of Penn State and President of Accademia Adrianea in Rome presents this lecture at 6:00 pm in Room G10 of McGill University's Macdonald-Harrington Building in Montreal.

Living on the Edge

November 17, 2008 Bing Thom of Bing Thom Architects in Vancouver presents this lecture at 6:00 pm in Room G10 of McGill University's Macdonald-Harrington Building in Montreal.

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THE ROOF OF A PARKING GARAGE IN VANCOUVER'S GASTOWN WAS RECENTLY TRANSFORMED INTO A DRIVE-IN FOR BOTH VEHICULAR AND PEDESTRIAN AUDIENCES IN A CELEBRATION OF VANCOUVER-RELATED FILMS.

TEXT IAN CHODIKOFF
PHOTOS GAVIN MACKENZIE

It is always inspiring to watch an architect find her voice in the profession in ways that go beyond standard practice. For Vancouver architect Peeroj Thakre and her husband, graduate architect Henning Knoetzele, the evolution of professional identity includes design advocacy in the form of Urban Republic, a non-profit organization that pulls in expertise from architects and non-architects alike. The couple recently completed their first major design intervention—the Gastown Drive-In.

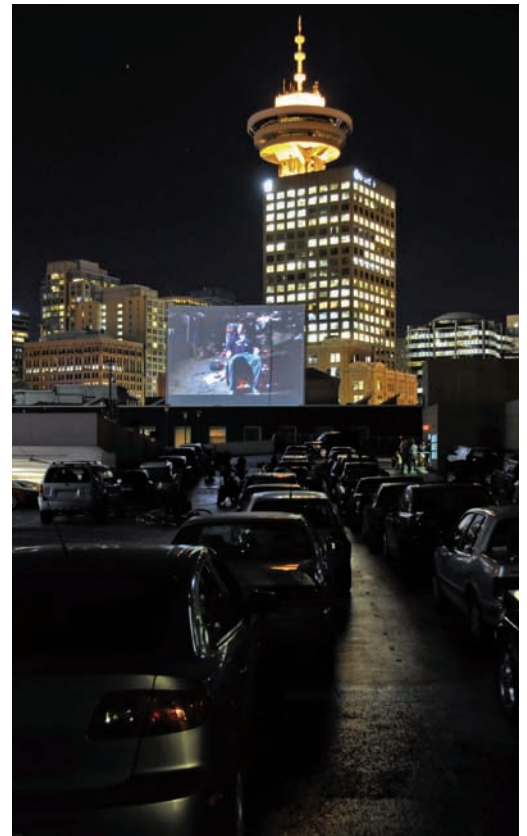
Having worked in a number of firms, Thakre wanted to discover what she could accomplish through her own initiatives. So in 2008, she made a leap of faith and left the firm she had worked at for several years to form ph5 architecture inc. with Knoetzele. The name of their practice is derived from the initials of their first names, as friends commonly refer to the couple as “PH.” The biggest challenge for ph5 currently is to obtain larger commissions, possibly at the institutional level. That day may come very soon, as Urban Republic is a vehicle enabling Thakre and Knoetzele to conduct speculative explorations into temporary urbanism.

ABOVE TWO VIEWS OF THE PHENOMENALLY SUCCESSFUL ROOFTOP GASTOWN DRIVE-IN, PROOF THAT INVENTIVE PROGRAMMING CAN ADDRESS UNDERUSED PUBLIC SPACE IN DOWNTOWN VANCOUVER IN A POSITIVE FASHION.

The Gastown Drive-In was installed on the rooftop of a parking garage in Vancouver's downtown Gastown neighbourhood. Participants immediately understood the project's intentions: Urban Republic's ephemeral experiment demonstrates how an underused utilitarian space can be transformed from banal anonymity by day into a community-oriented social space at night, where people can congregate either inside or outside the hermetic capsules of their cars to enjoy campy flicks together.

The three-night drive-in opened just after Labour Day with *Hard Core Logo*, a film directed by Bruce McDonald that follows a punk band touring Western Canada. Other films in the series include *Fetching Cody*, David Ray's story of drug addicts in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, and *Eve and the Fire Horse*, a film by Julia Kwan about a precocious nine-year-old girl growing up in a traditional Chinese family in Vancouver. Cineworks partnered with Urban Republic to program the short films, all of which relate to poignant cultural issues affecting Vancouverites.

To project the films, Thakre and Knoetzele designed a screen measuring nine by 12 metres, which was assembled on site due to the height restrictions of the parkade. The entire project cost just over \$20,000—raised through a number of sources—with most of the money spent on the



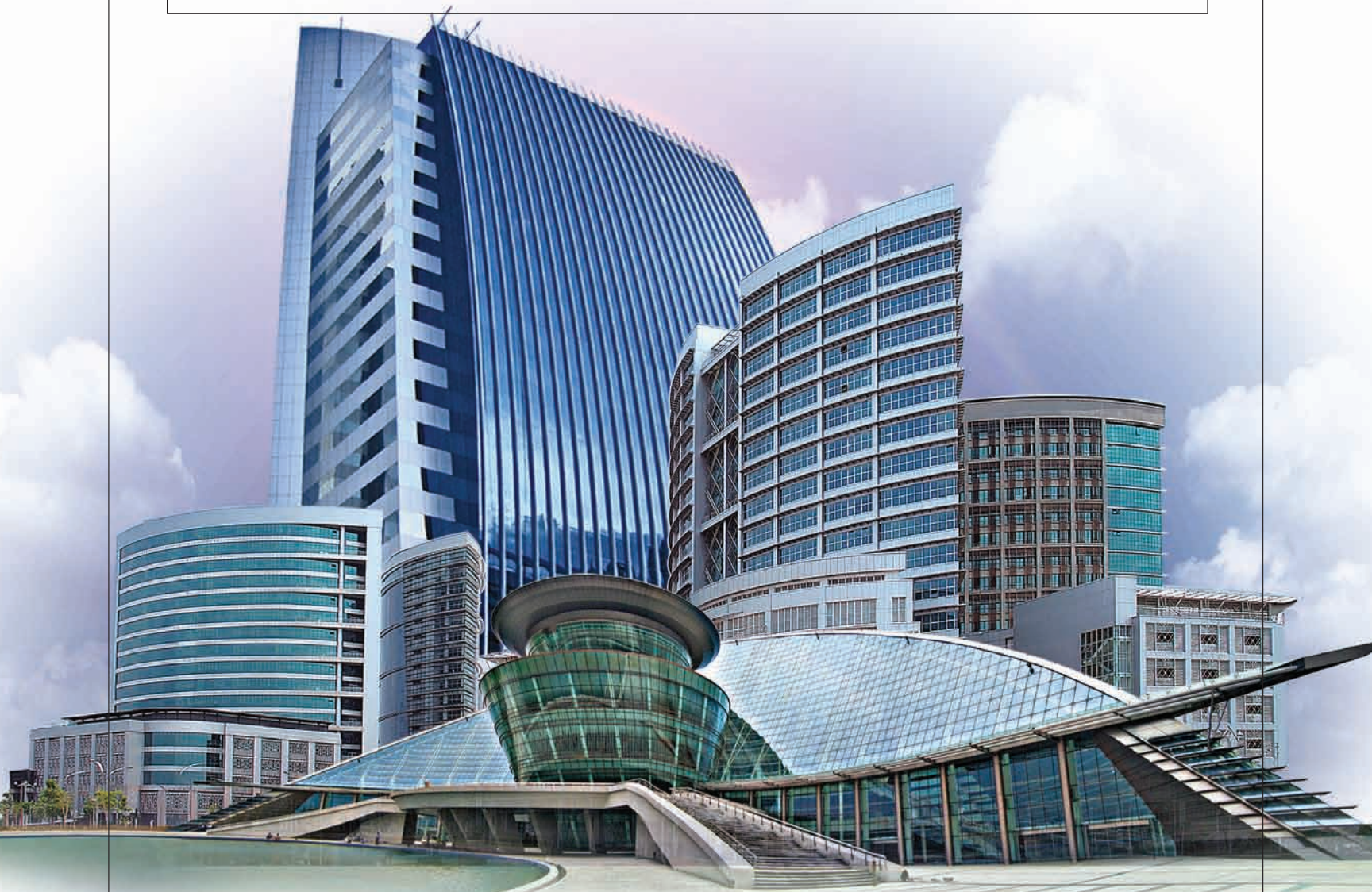
projection screens and audio-visual equipment. Admission was a mere \$6 per vehicle—standard evening parking garage rates, and pedestrians and cyclists were welcomed free of charge.

This wasn't Urban Republic's first public installation. In 2007, they organized a video installation of nature-inspired imagery to celebrate the Pine Street Community Garden's inaugural harvest. And in 2005, both Thakre and Knoetzele were involved with Space Agency's FrontierSpace—the temporary transformation of Gastown's Trounce Alley (see *CA*, October 2005). Their next project will look at a suburban site beyond the downtown core.

One of Urban Republic's strengths is the fact that the organization works with people who aren't architects; they recognize that artists, filmmakers and community leaders can contribute vital and complementary expertise to public projects. With a little more time and a few more projects behind them, Urban Republic will undoubtedly be appreciated by Vancouver for the tremendous value that they have provided in reaching beyond the architectural community as a successful agent of change for the city. **CA**

For more information on Urban Republic, please visit their website at www.urbanrepublic.ca.

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